

Minnesota's State Early Intervention Project

This project is a cooperative effort between the Departments of Children, Families and Learning, Health and Human Services, in the implementation of interagency early childhood intervention for professionals and parents.

IFSP Focus/Discussion Meetings

*Individual Family Service Plans for
Children Three Years of Age and
Older with Disabilities*

S U M M A R Y R E P O R T

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IFSP Focus/Discussion Meetings Summary Report

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IFSP Focus/ Discussion Meetings

I. BACKGROUND / PURPOSE

During April - May, 1996, the Minnesota Interagency Early Intervention Project sponsored 5 Focus Discussion meetings throughout the state on the topic of Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs) for children 3 years of age and older with disabilities. These meetings were held in the communities of:

- Bloomington
- Eveleth
- St. Paul
- Detroit Lakes
- Montevideo

The purpose of these meetings was to:

- *Identify and understand system changes necessary to promote IFSP development for children ages 3 and above with disabilities.*
- *Increase knowledge of participants as to the issues, benefits, boundaries, protections and mechanics of implementing the IFSP 3 and above for children with disabilities.*
- *Hear about the local application efforts regarding IFSPs ages 3 and above for children with disabilities, and;*
- *Collect information for future policy development.*

The target audience included:

Interagency Early Intervention Committee members (IEIC), including:

- Directors
- Coordinators and
- Supervisors of Education Health and Human Services
- Other Interagency Collaborative Members

The meeting agenda included:

- ***An overview of how Minnesota is evolving to the IFSP for all children with disabilities,***
- ***Presentations by local teams implementing IFSPs for children 3 and above with disabilities,***
- ***Focus group discussions around three key questions:***
 - 1) *What assets and opportunities are available through the current system/policies that allow one to go forward with IFSP's ages three and above? What stands in your way?*
 - 2) *What has worked well in current and past training? What resources are currently available to support training? What are training and information needs? What gets in the way of providing this training now?*
 - 3) *How do you see using IFSPs for ages three to Kindergarten? What are the opportunities and barriers of the uses?*
- ***Participants were also asked to complete a survey regarding the status of implementing IFSP's for children 3 years and above with disabilities in their communities.***

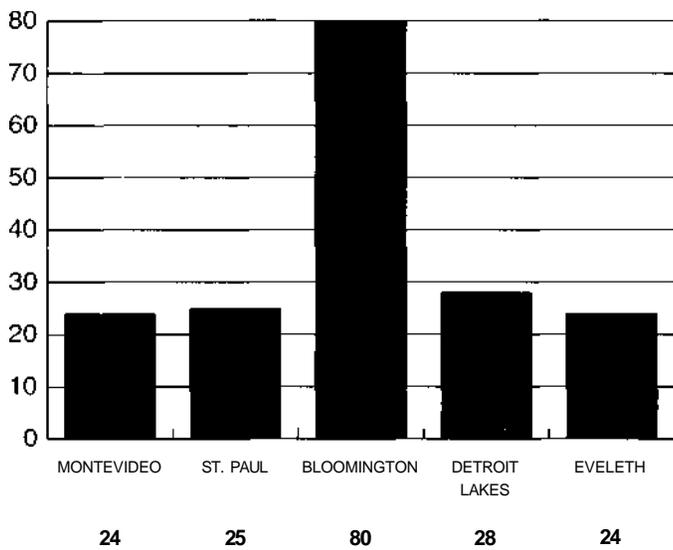
Presenters at the meetings included members of the MN State Interagency Early Intervention Team and 2 local teams per meeting site who are implementing the IFSP process and or document for children 3 years and above with disabilities disabilities.

II. PARTICIPANTS

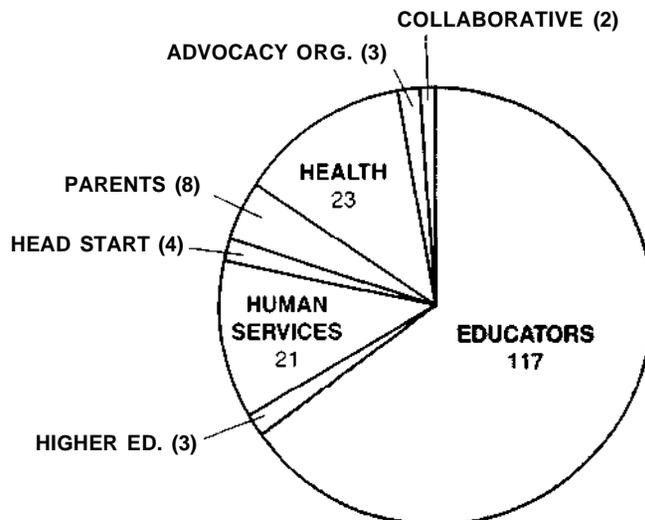
The following charts show the number of persons participating in the IFSP Focus/Discussion Meetings by site and by representative grouping:

PARTICIPATION BY SITE:

*181 persons participated in these 5 meeting sites.
The following is a breakdown:*



PARTICIPATION BY REPRESENTATIVE GROUPINGS:



Comment: Although the target audience was mainly administrators and coordinators, many of the participants were practitioners.

III. SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Participants of the focus/discussion meetings each participated in a small group of 8-12 people that was facilitated by a state early intervention team member.



Each group was asked to respond to a set of questions with all responses recorded.

The following is a summary of the responses to these questions:

What assets and opportunities are available through the current system/policies that allow one to go forward with IFSP's ages three and above?

The existing IEIC's provide the necessary administrative structures.

Perceived high degree of administrative support for a single-plan process.

Interest in and support for a variety of collaborative efforts due in part to funding that supports specific initiatives.

Existing process is family-focused and family driven; existing model is well received by families.

Strong sense that policy makers at the state level are committed and are providing necessary leadership.

What stands in your way?

Differences in rules and requirements of the variety of agencies and services that may be involved.

Time commitment necessary and multiple demands on time.

Conflicts regarding role definitions (typical "turf" issues).

Lack of interagency agreements that would assure agency involvement.

W *hat has worked well in current and past training? What resources are currently available to support training?*

Clear preference and strong support for training sponsored by the state but delivered on a regional/local basis.

Training provides an opportunity to bring people together and exchange information.

Expressed satisfaction with existing content and materials.

W *hat are the training and information needs? What gets in the way of providing this training now?*

Strong expressed need for technology related training (software, computerized IFSP document training and telecommunications information sharing).

Focused, specific topics of a "how-to" nature; for example, an example of a completed, "model" IFSP.

Distance, time, and funding are the most prevalent barriers.

How do you see using IFSPs for ages three to Kindergarten? What are the opportunities and barriers of the uses?

IFSP supports a family oriented, interagency emphasis for children.

Eases the transition for children and provides continuity for children and families.

Opportunities for continued service coordinator for children and families.

Major barriers appear to be resistance to change, learning yet a new way of doing things.

IV. SURVEY

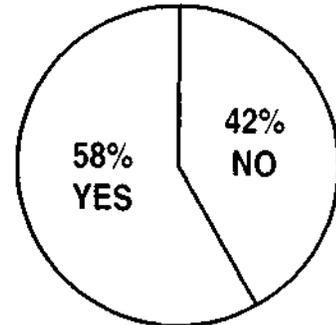
Participants in the statewide focus/discussion group meetings were asked to complete a survey regarding the status of IFSP implementation for children 3 and above in their communities.

The following information is a summary of the findings.

1. Is your community using the IFSP process and document for children eligible for ECSE ages 3 and above?

Of the 181 persons attending the meetings 113 completed a survey. Each participant was allowed to complete a survey there were duplicates. When tallying the survey information was combined by community The overall survey data represents 60 communities from throughout the state.

Of the 60 communities, 35 responded that they are in some stage of implementing the IFSP for children 3 and older with 25 communities responded that they are not implementing the IFSP beyond the mandatory age.



Most respondents indicated that they place more emphasis on the "IFSP process" than the "IFSP document".

Of those implementing the IFSP process and or document most reported they are doing so on a limited basis, under the following circumstances:

- when parents request it as an alternative to the IEP
- when multiple agencies are involved
- for a select group (e.g. all children transitioning, or all 4 yr. olds)
- on a pilot basis for a select group (e.g. to test a single planning process)

2. Please describe your community system for developing IFSPs for children age 3 and above.

a) Who is involved in developing the IFSPs?

Respondents indicated that all service providers or team member relevant to the child's needs are involved in the development of the IFSP.

b) How is the role/ function of service coordinator filled?

Most respondents indicated that the role/function of the Service Coordinator is filled by the 3-5 ECSE teach, Some indicated that this Junction is shared among service providers or that a designated person serves as a Service Coordinator for all children.

c) How are decisions made regarding who receives services using an IFSP, etc?

Most responded that this was a team decision with strong support for family preference.

3. If you are using IFSPs for kids age three and above and are from education:

a) Are you using the document and process for all kids eligible for ECSE?

25% = YES

- 75% = NO

b) Are you using the document and process for only kids that require interagency services and are eligible for ECSE?

44% = YES

- 56% = NO

c) Are you using the process only for eligible children ages three and above and then completing other appropriate planning documents (e.g. IEP, ISP)?

15% = YES

- 85% = NO

d) Are you using the process and document for children eligible for ECSE who require education services only?

42 % = YES

- 58 % = NO

LIMITATIONS OF THE DATA

1. The sampling of survey information was limited by the number of communities represented.
2. Although the target audience was administrators and coordinators, much of the survey information was provided by direct service professionals.
3. Individuals that attended these meetings were primarily persons who were strong supporters of the IFSP process for children 3 and above with disabilities.
4. The survey information may be skewed due to the high numbers representing the Metropolitan area

V. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINDINGS

The current Interagency Early Intervention Committees (IEICs) appear to provide an administrative structure that supports local communities in their efforts to implement IESP process for children 3 and above with disabilities.

IEICs are seen as a model for collaboration with strong desire to connect with other community collaborative efforts to support young children with disabilities and their families.

Assistance is needed in the development of local interagency agreements that address roles and responsibilities, and financial obligations of specific agencies and service providers.

There is a strong support for a family - centered system of service delivery for children 3 and above with disabilities and their families.

There is a desire for continuity and ongoing leadership at the state level to support local efforts.

There is a clear preference and strong support for training sponsored by the state but delivered at the regional level. Training efforts that provide networking opportunities, focus on topics of "how-to" nature and use technology as a method to deliver information to local and regional sites are preferred.

Due to the limitations in the data collected, a re-design of the survey and an effort to get a broader representation of responses is recommended.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR A
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